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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [PE](#)
SUBJECT: WHY GARCIA WON AND HUMALA LOST

REF: LIMA 348

Classified By: Polcouns Alexander Margulies. Reason: 1.4(d).

SUMMARY

11. (SBU) SUMMARY: As recently as April of this year, polls showed that APRA's Alan Garcia had the highest negatives of any politician in Peru. Garcia achieved his 52.6 percent victory over Union por el Peru's (UPP) Ollanta Humala by appealing to metropolitan voters' fears that Humala would be a pawn of Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez, undermine democratic institutions, and reverse the economic growth trend established under President Alejandro Toledo. Humala and Chavez did their bit to reinforce Garcia's strategy. Humala radicalized his image during the second round through authoritarian pronouncements, by hardening his opposition to the Free Trade Agreement with the U.S. and by his refusal to disown Chavez's intromissions in Peru's electoral processes. Chavez showed that he did not have the self control to avoid taking Garcia's bait--a lesson that candidates facing Chavez-backed candidates in Nicaragua and Mexico would do well to note. While Garcia's strategy was (just) successful on a national level, it is unlikely to translate into a winning formula for the upcoming regional/municipal elections, where the Humalistas or other "outsider" parties must be considered the favorites to win in most of the races.
END SUMMARY.

A WIN BASED ON IDEOLOGICAL AND GEOGRAPHIC FACTORS

12. (C) Alan Garcia, in a 1/17 meeting with visiting WHA P/DAS Charles Shapiro (Reftel), previewed the 2006 election campaign as both an ideological contest relatively equally divided between Humala on the left, Unidad Nacional's Lourdes Flores on the right and Garcia trying to position himself in the center; and a similarly equally divided geographic one, between Humala's base in the marginalized and rejectionist south (which historically has sided with "outsider" candidates like Fujimori and Toledo), APRA's "solid north," and Flores' Lima stronghold. His strategy, Garcia confided, was to run in the first round against Flores, whom he successfully tagged as the "candidate of the rich," and then place his trust in the "common sense" of the electorate in

the run-off against the "irrational and non-programmatic" Humala.

13. (U) The balloting results confirm the validity of Garcia's analysis of voting patterns and his strategy for taking advantage of them. APRA, which historically has been weakest in southern Peru, dropped every department in that region to Humala. Garcia won handily in Ica and on the northern coast. The greater Lima metropolitan area, which accounts for over 38 percent of registered voters, was the deciding factor in determining Peru's next president. In the first round Lima was, as Garcia predicted, Flores' territory; she took a plurality of 30.5 percent there, well ahead of Humala's 21.2 percent and Garcia's 19.5 percent. Her narrow elimination from the race had the result of converting the second round chiefly into a contest over who could best appeal to her voters. That contest was won hands-down by Garcia, who beat Humala by 62-38 percent in Lima, and by 68-32 percent in Callao.

SO HOW DID HE DO IT?

16. (SBU) Garcia achieved his decisive win in Lima/Callao by effectively cultivating the fears of metropolitan residents that Humala would be a pawn of Venezuela's Chavez, that "El Comandante" represented a return to authoritarian and military rule which would undermine democratic institutions and respect for human rights, and that the UPP candidate's economic policies would scare off foreign investment, lose preferential access to the U.S. and other markets, and lead to a reversal of the growth trend established by the Toledo Administration. Garcia received strong support in these efforts to demonize Humala from most major media organizations, particularly publications like dailies "Correo" and "Expreso" and the Frecuencia Latina TV channel, all of which were previously highly critical of APRA and its leader.

17. (C) Humala and Chavez also played into Garcia's hand. Instead of moving towards the center after the first round of voting, Humala's discourse became even more radical and authoritarian. His refusal to condemn Chavez's intromissions in Peru's election (although his wife Nadine and his spokesman Carlos Tapia did so) and his rejection of the Free Trade Agreement ran counter to public opinion polling which indicated that 70 percent of Peruvians rejected Chavez's actions and 55 percent favored the FTA. Meanwhile, Chavez consistently reacted to Garcia's constant prodding by issuing statements in support of Humala and condemning the APRA leader and Toledo. These interventions by the Venezuelan played very poorly with the Peruvian electorate and enabled Garcia to launch the campaign slogan, "Either for Chavez, or for Peru!" (COMMENT: Chavez lowered his profile mid-way through the second round--the result, we suspect, of advice from the Humala team that he was hurting his favorite. Garcia got Chavez back into the fray by throwing out goading statements. Garcia recognized that Chavez is continuously on the public stage and has a stream of consciousness speaking style (for example, in the weekly, hours-long "Alo Presidente" appearances), guaranteeing that the Venezuelan leader would eventually respond. When he did, the Peruvian press immediately jumped on it. Chavez' narcissism overwhelmed both his self-control and self-interest. That is a lesson that anti-Chavista candidates in Nicaragua and Mexico might turn to their advantage. END COMMENT.)

COMMENT: LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

18. (C) Garcia's strategy was sufficient to eke out a victory on the national level. It is unlikely, however, to prosper if applied to the upcoming regional/municipal elections. Those races will draw on geographic prejudices, which favor Humala (who took 15 of the 25 regions in the

second round of voting), and on the local electorate's demand for large infrastructure projects and improved health, education and public security services from the central government. The fears of Greater Lima residents are not shared by their provincial kin, while the persuasive power of the mass media shrinks exponentially as one moves into the interior. Furthermore, many of the media organizations that favored Garcia when confronted by the specter of a Humala presidency will now return to their habitual critical posture

vis-a-vis the President-elect. If the Humalistas and other "outsiders" are to be defeated in the regional/municipal balloting, it will have to be accomplished by meeting residents' tangible needs. END COMMENT.
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